

MAYOR'S GROUP HOMES TASK FORCE

Major Recommendations to the City:

Retain existing three-tiered classification:

1. A *family* is defined as one or more persons immediately related by blood, marriage or adoption and living as a single housekeeping unit in a dwelling. A family also may include not more than two persons who are unrelated for the purpose of this title.
2. A *group home* is defined as a facility in which more than three (current definition is two) but less than 16 persons who are unrelated by blood, marriage or adoption reside while receiving therapy or counseling, but not nursing care. The facility shall be licensed or approved by the State of Nebraska or other appropriate agency if required. A group home must receive a conditional use permit from the Building and Safety Department. It must be separated from another existing group home by 1,200 feet (3.5 blocks) or 2,640 feet (7.5 blocks), depending on the zoning district.
3. A *health care facility* has 16 or more residents and must receive a special use permit from the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission. There is no separation requirement. The facility must maintain a state license.

Implement a reasonable accommodation process.

This process would allow individuals protected by the federal Fair Housing Act to request a waiver from City regulations. Applications for waivers would be reviewed by the City authority with jurisdiction over the regulation at issue. The reviewing authority would make its recommendation to the City Council, which would decide the waivers.

Major Recommendations to the State:

Increase training requirements and improve training quality.

This includes greater oversight of the training curriculum. The required type and length of training should be commensurate with the needs of the population to be served. Continuing education could provide opportunities for additional training to meet specific client needs. Strengthened training requirements can produce more capable staff who may not rely on police assistance as frequently as they do now.

Improve ability to monitor performance, inspect for compliance and respond to problems.

Incident tracking procedures and an early warning protocol can identify potential problem situations prior to their escalation. Continued dialogue with the City of Lincoln, specifically the Lincoln Police Department, can assist with identifying potential problem facilities.

Increase availability of appropriate placements for high-needs clients.

Additional facilities will be needed to provide services for high-needs residents. Additional training should be required for staff persons serving high-needs clients. A system to identify high-needs clients and improve placement decisions made for them should be developed. Facilities serving high-needs clients should be subject to greater oversight.

Continue a dialogue with local officials, providers, advocates, consumers and neighbors.

The dialogue and exchange of information during the task force process was insightful and meaningful. Lines of communication among the community, providers and City and State officials should remain open and accessible.